

THE MINOR ROCK-EDICTS OF ASOKA AND SOME CONNECTED PROBLEMS

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The recent excavations in the Chitaldrug District of Mysore State, described elsewhere in this issue (pp. 181ff.), invite a fresh attention to a number of important historical questions relating to the Mauryan and Andhra régimes in this part of the Deccan. A re-assessment of the epigraphical and historical data is an appropriate counterpart to the new evidence provided by the excavator, and in the following paper this task has been initiated by the Joint Director General of Archaeology, who was formerly the Government Epigraphist for India.

ALTOGETHER eight versions of the Minor Rock-edicts of Aśoka are at present known. They are found at (1) Rūpnāth (Central Provinces), (2) Sahasrām (Shāhābād District, Bihar), (3) Bairāt (Jaipur State), (4) Māski (Raichūr District, Nizam's Dominions), (5-7) Brahmagiri, Siddāpur and Jaṭiṅga-Rāmeśvara, all three in the Chitaldrug District of the Mysore State and situated close to one another near the site of an ancient town, and (8) Yerraguḍi (Kurnool District, Madras Presidency).¹ This list excludes the well-known Calcutta-Bairāt edict, now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, and commonly known as the Bhābrū edict, as its contents are quite different from the other eight edicts. Of these eight edicts, the first four contain a single edict and, though their texts differ slightly from one another, the sum total of their contents is practically the same. While the text of the Māski edict is the shortest and the portion containing the much-discussed figure of 256 is not found in it, it is the only edict so far known which mentions Aśoka by name. The three Mysore edicts and the Yerraguḍi edict, however, contain a second edict of which the last-mentioned supplies an enlarged version. Furthermore, while all the other five versions record an order directly from the king, probably issued from the headquarters at Pāṭaliputra, the three Mysore edicts were communicated to the Mahāmātras at Isila through the prince (*ayaputa*) and the Mahāmātras at Suvarṇagiri. Isila must be identified with the site of the ancient town at the foot of Brahmagiri near Siddāpur (see pp. 184ff.) and, whatever may be the location of Suvarṇagiri, it is clear that the remotest portion of Aśoka's empire in the South was ruled from this place, probably the headquarters of the southernmost province, by a governor who was a prince of the royal blood.

That there were other provinces within the empire of Aśoka in charge of royal princes with headquarters at Tosali, Ujjayinī and Taxila is known from the separate edicts at Dhauli and Jaugaḍā. We also know from the Junāgaḍh inscription of Rudradāman that the province of Surāshṭra was under the governorship of the Yavana Tushāspah in the time of Aśoka. The provinces which were placed under the administration of a royal prince must have been of some special political importance.

Tosali was the capital of the newly conquered province of Kaliṅga, and it is understandable that a royal prince should be in charge in order to create confidence among the peoples who had suffered much from the war. Taxila was a capital of the Gandhāra country and held a key-position in the empire, as did Ujjayinī. But why was Suvarṇagiri,

¹ For nos. 1 to 7 cf. Hultzsch, *The Inscriptions of Aśoka, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* (Oxford, 1925) I, 166ff.; and for no. 8, *An. Rep. A.S.I.*, 1928-29 (Delhi, 1933), pp. 166f.

which must have been located far in the South and far away from the official headquarters at Pāṭaliputra, considered important enough to be placed under a governor of the royal blood? This raises the fundamental question of the Mauryan expansion in South India. Was it Aśoka who conquered the southern parts of his empire as he conquered Kalinga, or were these possessions acquired by one of his predecessors? Inscriptional evidence is unfortunately very meagre in this respect. The information supplied by his edicts implies that the only conquest Aśoka ever made was that of Kalinga. The horrors of war, which he must have witnessed with his own eyes, put a stop to his lust for expansion, and thereafter the only conquest of which he could think was the conquest by 'morality'. Was then Chandragupta, his grandfather and founder of the Maurya dynasty, responsible for this conquest?

Several Jaina works mention king Chandragupta as a disciple of Bhadrabāhu the last of the *śrutakevalins*, and tradition has it that, when Bhadrabāhu died on the Koṭavapra hill (modern Chandragiri) at Śravaṇa-Belgoḷa in Mysore State, his chief disciple Chandragupta was his only attendant.¹ This tradition is present in several inscriptions, the earliest of which is no older than the seventh century A.D. and the latest is of the fifteenth century.² But these inscriptions speak only of Chandragupta's association with the Jaina teacher; nowhere do they mention his rule in the South. The only epigraph which makes a definite statement is a late record of the fourteenth century according to which Nāgarakhaṇḍa (modern Shikārpur Taluk, Shimoga District, Mysore) was 'ruled by the wise Chandragupta', though it does not mention the dynasty to which he belonged.³ There is another inscription of A.D. 1204 from the Shikārpur Taluk which states that the Kuntala country, which included the northern parts of Mysore, was ruled by the 'nine Nandas, the Mauryas and the Gupta family'.⁴ The only safe conclusion that can be drawn from the evidence supplied by these late inscriptions is that it was believed in the thirteenth-fourteenth century that the Maurya rule had extended as far south as northern Mysore.

The early Tamil literature, however, throws some further light on the expansion of the Maurya kingdom in the South.⁵ The late Diwan Bahadur S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar discussed in detail these sources and came to the following conclusions:—

1. That the Mauryas carried their invasion to the farthest south of India;
2. That they were in hostile occupation of forts in the northern borders of the Tamil land extending from Pulikat in the east almost to Goa in the west; and
3. That these Aryans were beaten back when the Mauryas and their successors at headquarters became too feeble or too much occupied to be able to retain their hold on the distant south.⁶

These references to the Maurya invasion of the South made by different early Tamil authors certainly have some historical basis. But none of them clearly mentions the ruler by whom this invasion was undertaken. That Aśoka was in no way responsible for it is

¹ B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore and Coorg from Inscriptions* (London, 1909), p. 4.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

³ B. L. Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, VIII (1904), p. 86, no. 263.

⁴ Rice, *ibid.*, VII (1902), 132, no. 225. The original inscription has *nava-Nanda-Gupta-Kula-Maurya-kṣhmāpar* which Rice translates as 'the nine Nandas, the Gupta-Kula Maurya kings'. But I would prefer to take the Guptas and the Mauryas separately. These two dynasties were so well known even in the early thirteenth century, to which period the inscription belongs, that I doubt if the author of the inscription would mix up the Mauryas and the Guptas.

⁵ S. K. Aiyangar, *Beginnings of South Indian History* (Madras, 1918), pp. 81ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

certain. We have mentioned above that the invasion of Kalinga is the only one referred to in the edicts. Moreover, in his thirteenth Rock-edict Aśoka names as his borderers in the South, the Choḍas and the Pāṇdyas, as far as Tāmraparṇī or Ceylon. The second Rock-edict gives the same names with the addition of two others, viz. Satiyaputra and Keralaputra, between the Pāṇdyas and Tāmraparṇī. All these, with the exception of Satiyaputra, have been definitely identified, and on the evidence of these edicts we can safely conclude that they were all outside Aśoka's dominions. He speaks of these friendly borderers in such terms as to preclude the possibility of aggression on his part against them.

The Mauryan invasion of the South must therefore have taken place during the reign either of Chandragupta or of his son Bindusāra. With the overthrow of the Nandas, the whole country under their suzerainty must have passed to Chandragupta. But neither inscriptions nor literature mention that either the Nandas or Chandragupta ever held sway over the Tamil land. We know from the foreign classical writers that Taxila, Ujjain and Kauśāmbī were included in the empire of Chandragupta, but they also are silent about the extent of his empire in the South. Chandragupta had indeed a long rule of 24 years to his credit, but his earlier years were occupied in war with the generals of Alexander in the North. He must have taken a good few years in the consolidation of the vast empire which came into his possession with the defeat of the Nandas, an empire to which he made no inconsiderable further addition by wresting the provinces in the north-west, including perhaps a portion of Baluchistan and Afghanistan, from the Greeks. He must have had to devote a considerable time to the consolidation of this conquered territory, and even after the actual cessation of hostilities he must have had to keep constant vigilance over his warlike neighbours in the North till such time as complete peace was achieved. In fact, even if we may believe a half of what the *Arthaśāstra* and the classical authors have to say about the splendour of Chandragupta's court and about his achievement in administration, many years of peaceful reign are implied; and in the circumstances it is hard to suppose that he would have had enough time left on his hands to undertake fresh conquests in the South.

If then neither Chandragupta nor Aśoka was responsible for the invasion of the Tamil land, the only Maurya ruler left to us is Bindusāra. There is, indeed, no definite indication of this conquest by Bindusāra either in literature or in inscriptions of an early period. Tāranātha, the Tibetan historian, says, however, that the Brahmin Chāṇakya, Bindusāra's minister, destroyed kings and ministers of about sixteen towns, and made the king undertake a war which brought all the territory between the eastern and western seas under his control.¹ Tāranātha does not disclose the source of his information, but that Chāṇakya remained in Bindusāra's service after the death or abdication of Chandragupta is corroborated by Hemachandra and the *Ārya-mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa*. The opinion of scholars is, however, divided on the interpretation of this passage of Tāranātha. Some see in it a reference to the annexation of the South, while others are of opinion that, since in Chandragupta's time itself the Maurya empire extended from Surāshṭra to Gangaridai (Bengal), a territory lying between the eastern and western seas, the statement of Tāranātha 'need mean nothing more than the suppression of a general revolt'.² I am, however, inclined to agree with Jayaswal that at least some of the sixteen States mentioned by Tāranātha must refer to those in the South. In the North we know only of one revolt in Bindusāra's time, and that was in Taxila, where Aśoka as a prince was sent to quell it. No mention is made of any other revolution in the North. Even if there were, it would be unreasonable to suppose

¹ *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, II (1916), 80 and note.

² H. C. Ray Chaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India* (4th edition, Calcutta, 1938), p. 244.

that all the sixteen States lay in the north. The very name of Amitrachates (Skt. *amitra-ghāta*, slayer of enemies) by which Bindusāra was known to the Greeks, shows that he was a warlike king.¹

If this theory of Bindusāra's conquest of the Tamil land is correct, we may have to admit that in Aśoka's time the Maurya Empire had already become somewhat reduced in size. The Cholas and the Pāṇḍyas must have, in that case, asserted their power soon after the invasion and regained their lost territory. Nevertheless, in spite of what had happened in his father's time Aśoka must, as his edicts show, have managed to establish with these powerful border territories good and friendly relations which he kept up throughout his reign.

Now to return to the question of the Minor Rock-edicts. We find that as many as five versions out of a total of eight are in the South. But what is their chronological position in the series of Aśoka's edicts? Scholars are now generally of opinion that they can be regarded as the earliest edicts issued by Aśoka. None of them contains any information as to when they were issued but there are evidences, both internal and external, from which we can come to a broad conclusion as to the approximate time of their issue. In all the Minor Rock-inscriptions Aśoka informs us that a little more than two and half years had passed since he became a lay disciple (*upāsaka*, *śākya* in the Rūpnāth version); that he had not been very zealous at the beginning, but that a year and somewhat more had passed since he visited the Saṃgha and he had been very zealous since then. The sixth Pillar-edict informs us that Aśoka issued his rescripts on morality in the twelfth year after his coronation. This must refer to the Minor Rock-edicts as they 'contain the first elements of Aśoka's *Dharma*, which we find more fully developed in his rock and pillar edicts'.² In the opinion of Hultzsch, the Rūpnāth and Sahasrām edicts must be considered earlier than others as 'they speak of inscriptions on rocks and pillars as a task which it was intended to carry out, and not as a *fait accompli*'.³ The Bairāt version is far too damaged to give us any definite idea as to where it ended. Only a few letters of line 8 are visible on the rock but, as the missing portion could be fitted comfortably into this line with the few concluding words running into the next line, it would not be unreasonable to suppose that the text in the Bairāt version was practically the same as in the other two Northern versions. In that case we may conclude that, of the Minor Rock-edicts, these three versions are the earliest, whilst the four Southern versions, excluding that at Māski, which contain a second inscription giving a more detailed exposition of the *Dharma*, are the latest. The place of the Māski version in this chronology cannot be definitely determined. But as this version contained only a single edict it was perhaps the earliest of the Southern versions. Of the rest, the three Mysore edicts are certainly contemporary as they were all written by the same scribe, and the Yerraguḍi version the latest, as it contains an enlarged version of the second edict. Aśoka appears to have started with the Northern versions which were meant for places nearer his capital and gradually proceeded southwards. Besides the

¹ R. K. Mookerji, *Chandragupta Maurya and his Times* (London, 1928), p. 62, asserts that Chandragupta himself was responsible for the conquests of the South. His theory is based on a passage of Plutarch in which it is stated that Chandragupta 'overran and subdued the whole of India with an army of 600,000'. Though Plutarch drew his sources from the contemporary historians of Alexander we know that he wrote a 'life' of Alexander and not a history of the conquests of the Greek king. Plutarch's account is for that reason full of historical inaccuracies and according to his own admission he did not in his work 'give the actions in full detail and with a scrupulous exactness'. McCrindle has pointed out this indifference of Plutarch to historical accuracy and has cautioned that Plutarch's accounts be used with care, since they are not intended as material for history. J. W. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great* (Westminster, 1896), p. 12.

² Hultzsch, op. cit., p. 44.

³ Ibid.

internal evidence adduced above there is also external evidence to show that the Minor Rock-edicts were issued earlier than the fourteen Rock-edicts. Yerraguḍi is the only site so far known where the Minor Rock-edicts and the fourteen main Rock-edicts are found side by side. I made a careful examination of the site on several occasions and came to the conclusion that the Minor Rock-edict at this place must have been engraved earlier than the other edicts. The rock on which this edict is incised is the lowest and occupies the most prominent position. Unlike the other inscribed rocks, there was no attempt to dress this boulder for the purpose of writing. Moreover, while there is a homogeneity in the writing of all the fourteen Rock-edicts, the writing of the Minor edict is different and was certainly incised by a different scribe. That he was not a skilled artisan, and might even have been illiterate, is apparent from the way in which he has done his job. The writing is very indifferent, and the lines are not straight. Evidently the scribe had before him a draft which he copied mechanically and, if a particular line in the draft did not fit into the space available on the stone, he continued it from the right towards the left till that line was finished.¹ Furthermore, the language of the Minor Rock-edict is in *r* dialect as found in the Gīrnār version and the three Mysore edicts, while the language of the fourteen Rock-edicts is in *l* dialect like the Kālsī version of the principal Rock-edicts and the Rūpnāth and Sahasrām versions of the Minor edict.

The next point to examine is whether the inscriptions of Aśoka throw any light on the tribes inhabiting the southernmost parts of his territories. In his edicts Aśoka mentions two classes of tribes, viz. (1) those living outside his territories (*antā*, borderers), and (2) those living within his empire. According to Rock-edict V, the borderers in the west (*āparāntā*) were the Yonas, the Kambojas, the Gandhāras, the Raṭhikas and the Pitinikas (or Raṭhika-Pitinikas). We have already noticed above who his southern borderers were. According to the Rock-edict XIII, the tribes which were distinguished from the above as living in the king's territory (*iha-rājavisaye*) were: the Yonas and the Kambojas, the Nābhakas and the Nābhapaṅktis, the Bhojas and the Pitinikas, the Āndhras and the Pārindas. It is clear from the statements made in the Rock-edicts V and XIII that there were Yonas, Kambojas, Bhojas and Pitinikas both inside and outside Aśoka's dominion. We shall not discuss here the exact location of their territories but it seems clear that we have to look for them in the north-west and west. The only two tribes who have to be located in the South are the Āndhras and the Pārindas, and we shall make an attempt here to locate their territories at the time of Aśoka.

The earliest mention of the Āndhras as a people is found in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*.² According to it Viśvāmitra had 100 sons. Some of them, viz. the Āndhras, Puṇḍras, Śavaras, Pulindas and Mūtivas, disobeyed their father and were cursed by him as outcastes (*dasyus*). The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* was compiled prior to 500 B.C. and, though the chapter

¹ I do not agree with Daya Ram Sahni that the Yerraguḍi version of the Minor Rock-edict is written in the boustrophedon style (*An. Rep. A.S.I.*, 1928-29, p. 165). In this style of writing the direction of line is alternated like the course of a plough, the first line usually beginning on the right and second on the left immediately below the end of the first and so on, and the lines are normally of approximately equal length where the nature of the surface of the material on which the record is incised permits. Had the writing on the Yerraguḍi inscription been in this style, the letters when written from right to left would have been reversed, which is not the case. Furthermore, the boustrophedon style of writing was abandoned in Greece about the sixth century B.C. and it is doubtful if the system would have continued in India nearly three centuries later.

² Chapter 33, VI, *Pañchikā* vii, 18 (ed. Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series).

in which this passage occurs is supposed to be of a later date, we cannot be far wrong in concluding that several centuries before the commencement of the Christian era the Āndhras were known as a people and were regarded as a non-Aryan tribe living on the outskirts of the Aryan settlement. A reference to the Āndhras is also given by Pliny (first century A.D.) who drew his materials from earlier sources. After Bengal and Kāliṅga (Gangarid Calingae), Pliny mentions the Modogalinga race, which must be identified with the country of Mudukaliṅga or Trikaliṅga, comprising Ganjam and Kosala. After this and before coming to the Āndhras, Pliny mentions a dozen tribes, very few of which can be definitely identified. One thing, however, seems certain, that Pliny did not describe them in any geographical order. McCrindle places most of these tribes 'in the region between the left bank of the Ganges and the Himalayas'.¹ After these tribes, whatever may be their location, are mentioned the Āndhras in the following words: 'Next come the Andarae, a more powerful tribe, with a great many villages and thirty towns fortified with walls and towers; they furnish their king with 100,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry and 1,000 elephants'.² Though Pliny does not give us any definite idea as to the exact location of the Āndhra territory, there is no doubt that they were a powerful race in the South, inhabiting the country between the Godāvarī and the Kṛishṇā. The Pāli literature, however, throws further light on the territory of the early Āndhras. The *Sarivāṇṇija Jātaka* mentions a town called Andhapura which was situated on the Telavāha river. Bhandarkar identifies this river either with the Tel or the Telangiri, both flowing near the confines of the Provinces of Madras and the Central Provinces, and suggests that this Andhapura must have been the capital of the early Āndhra kingdom.³ If his identification is correct, the early Āndhra territory must have comprised parts of both the Provinces of Madras and the C.P. The Pāli *Apadāna* gives a list of tribes that came to pay homage to Thera Jātukaṇṇika when he was born as a *seṭṭhi* (banker) in Hamsavati⁴, among which is mentioned the Āndhra. According to the *Suttanipāta*, Andhakarattṭha was on the bank of the Godāvarī and Assaka and Mūḷaka (*var.* Aḷaka) were two Āndhra principalities. Both Assaka and Mūḷaka are mentioned in the Nasik cave inscription of Gautamī Balaśrī, issued in the nineteenth year of her grandson Puḷumāyi, as being within the dominion of Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi. Varāhamihira places both these in the north-west division of India⁵, but undoubtedly they were in the South. In fact the Pāli literature gives us a positive proof in the matter of their identification. Bāvari, a Brahmin ascetic of Śrāvastī went to Dakṣiṇāpatha and lived in an island in the Godāvarī, half of which was in the territory of Assaka and the other half in that of Aḷaka (Mūḷaka). He sent his sixteen pupils to the Buddha at Śrāvastī in order to find out whether his claims to Buddha-hood were justified. Going to Śrāvastī these pupils went northwards through Aḷaka, Patitṭhāna, Māhissati, Ujjeni, Gonaddha, Vidisā, Vana-sāhva (or Tumbava), Kosambī and Sāketa. Two facts emerge from this statement, viz. that both Assaka and Mūḷaka were contiguous cities and both lay on the Godāvarī to the south-east of Paṭṭhan. All these indications suggest that the territory of the early Āndhras lay further to the north and that it was extended to the south, right down to northern

¹ J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian* (London, 1877), p. 137, note.

² Pliny, *Natural History*, Book VI, XXII.

³ *Indian Antiquary*, XLVII (1918), p. 71.

⁴ *Apadāna*, II, pp. 358-59, P.T.S. edition.

⁵ Fleet, 'Topographical List', *Ind. Ant.*, XXII (1893), p. 174.

Mysore, only in the time of the later Sātavāhanas. There is, however, a verse in the *Mahābhārata* which seems to go against this view. The verse reads as follows:—

*Paṇḍrako Vāsudevaś=cha Vaṅgaḥ Kāliṅgakaś=tathā
Ākarshaḥ Kuntalaś=ch=aiva Vānavāsy=Āndhrakāś=tathā.*

(Sabhā, xxxi, 11.)

According to this verse Vāsudeva, the king of Puṇḍra, the kings of Vaṅga, Kāliṅga, Ākarsha (mistake for Ākara?) and Kuntala, and the Āndhras of Vanavāsi were among the kings and tribes attending the *Rājasūya* of Yudhisṭhira. This, however, need not militate against the above theory, as we know that, though a part of the *Mahābhārata* was compiled in the third or fourth century B.C., the work of compilation went on for several centuries, right down to the fourth century A.D. This theory, that the Āndhras moved southwards later, is borne out both by inscriptions and by coins. At Banavāsi (Kanara District) and Malavalli (Shimoga District, Mysore) we have inscriptions of the time of Hāritiputra Śātakarṇi. At Talgunda (Shikarpur Taluq, Mysore) there is an inscription of the Kadamba king Kākusthavarman which mentions that, in the Śiva temple there, Śātakarṇi and the other great kings had worshipped.¹ A king Kubiraka is mentioned in two inscriptions on the casket found at Bhaṭṭiprolu (Guntur District).² Bühler places these inscriptions in about 200 B.C., i.e. in the period immediately following that of Aśoka. The village of Bhaṭṭiprolu is situated near the southern bank of the Kṛishṇā but there is nothing to prove that Kubiraka was an Āndhra ruler.

Coins of the Sātavāhanas have been obtained in abundance at Chandravalli in the Chitaldrug District of Mysore. But all these coins belong either to the later Sātavāhana rulers or their feudatories. The only coins about which there is a difference of opinion among scholars with regard to date, are the large lead coins with the legend *Sadakaṇa Kaḷālaya Mahārāṭhisa*. Though Rapson is doubtful whether this person is identical or not with the Kaḷālaya-Mahārāṭhi of the Aṅgiya-kula, mentioned in the Nānāghaṭ inscription as the father of queen Nāganikā, wife of king Śrī Śātakarṇi and mother of Vedisiri, I am inclined to treat the two as quite different persons. Rapson has himself pointed out that, since the coin apparently bears a title and not a personal name, it may well have been issued by some later members of the family.³ This view actually gains strength by the fact of the reverse type and fabric of this coin being similar to those of the large lead coins of Chuṭukaḍānamāda and Muḍānamāda found at Karwar in North Kanara.⁴ In the face of what is stated above, the theory that the coins of Kaḷālaya Mahārāṭhi may belong to the period of Śrī-Sāta, the third member of the Āndhra dynasty, has to be given up and they must be relegated to a later period. As stated above, all the other coins which have been discovered in this area are also of a later period and there is no numismatic evidence to show that North Kanara or North Mysore was in the occupation of the early Āndhra rulers. It is perhaps significant that the coins of the early Sātavāhana kings are found in Malwa, Kṛishṇā and Godāvarī Districts and in parts of the Central Provinces, and none in the southern parts of the later Sātavāhana empire. Vijayantī or Banavāsi was certainly at a

¹ Rice, *Epi. Carn.*, VII (1902), Text, p. 200; Transl., p. 113.

² *Ep. Ind.*, II (1894), pp. 328-29, nos. 6 and 9. For corrections see H. Lüders, *List of Brāhmī Inscriptions*, nos. 1335 and 1338.

³ E. J. Rapson, *Coins of the Andhra Dynasty* (London, 1908), p. lxxxiii.

⁴ Rapson, *ibid.*, para. 69. Rapson reads the name as *Dhuṭukaḍānamāda* and corrects as *Chuṭu*. But to me the reading on all the coins seems to be clearly *Chuṭu*.

later time an important city in the Sātavāhana empire, as it was from the camp here that Gautamīputra Śrī-Śātakarṇi issued his orders to the governor at Govardhana (Nāsik) after his victory over Nahapāna, whose known dates would cover the period A.D. 119-124 on the assumption that his inscriptions are dated in the Śaka era, and it remained so until it passed over to the Kadambas. The earliest Sātavāhana coins so far discovered during excavations by the Mysore Archaeological Department are those of Yajña Śātakarṇi. The date of both Vāsishthīputra Puṣumāyi and Gautamīputra Yajña Śātakarṇi is still a disputed question. But there is no doubt that they have to be placed between the second quarter and the end of the second century A.D.¹ In that case we have to admit that there is no definite indication that the Sātavāhanas penetrated into the country to the south of the Kṛishṇā before the second century A.D. It was perhaps Gautamīputra Śrī-Śātakarṇi who was responsible for the conquest of the country lying to the south of the Kṛishṇā as he was for the conquest of the dominion of Nahapāna, and it was perhaps about the same time, if not somewhat later, that the feudatory family of the Mahārāṭhis began their rule in North Mysore. The discovery of a Roman silver piece of the age of Augustus along with those of the Mahārāṭhi during excavations at the Bindipatti site in the Chandravalli area would only show that in no case can the Mahārāṭhi coins be dated earlier than the first century A.D.² These Roman coins must have been in use for some time in the country after their introduction into India and therefore cannot be taken as a certain proof that the Mahārāṭhis cannot be placed later than the first century A.D.

The next question that requires an answer is why there should be three sets of the Minor Rock-edicts in Mysore within such a narrow compass. An examination of the distribution of the edicts of Aśoka will perhaps provide an explanation. While the principal Pillar-edicts are found in places which must have been important cities and towns in the interior, the main Rock-edicts are invariably found near the border of Aśoka's dominion. In certain places they are found at places not far from each other as Dhauli and Jaugada, and Shāhbāzgarhī and Mānsehrā. The group of the Mysore edicts would therefore seem to indicate the southernmost limit of Aśoka's empire. This part in the extreme south of the dominion was not apparently important enough to justify the engraving of a series of the main Rock-edicts at a later date anywhere in the neighbourhood, as was done at Yerragudi. Of course, it had a political importance in that it bordered on the territories of friendly powers, but the political relations with these powers must have been maintained from the headquarters at Pāṭaliputra or from the governor's seat at Suvarṇagiri. As we know, the same scribe was responsible for engraving all the three edicts. He must have been given a free hand in the selection of the rocks for this purpose, and exercised his discretion in selecting for this purpose suitable rocks, situated at close intervals.

In the whole series of the edicts of Aśoka the Mysore edicts are unique in one respect, namely, that the name of the scribe Chapaḍa is found engraved at the end. But out of the three words not directly connected with the edict which the scribe has written at the end, the first two are in Brāhmī and the last, consisting of five letters (*lipikareṇa*) he has chosen to inscribe in the Kharoshthī alphabet which was prevalent only in the North-Western Frontier. Vincent Smith concludes from this that the scribe was a northerner.³ Though there is nothing against a northerner being in the service of Aśoka at headquarters or in one of the governors' seats, possibly sent south for a particular piece of work, there seems to be evidence against it. Though nothing can be determined from the name Chapaḍa,

¹ D. C. Sircar, *Successors of the Sātavāhanas* (Calcutta, 1939), Introduction, p. 3.

² *Excavation at Chandravalli* (Archaeological Survey of Mysore, Bangalore, 1931), p. 17.

³ Vincent A. Smith, *Asoka* (third edition, Oxford, 1920), p. 153.

whether he was a northerner or not, he seems to have left a definite indication as to his habitat in the last word used by him. The actual word used here is *lipikareṇa*, while in Kharoshthī versions as Shāhbāzgarhī and Mānsehrā the Persian equivalent of the word, viz. *dipi* or *nipi*, has invariably been used, instead of *lipi*. Moreover, had he come from the north, one would have expected him to write the whole superfluous portion, which could not have been in the original draft supplied to him, in Kharoshthī, once he decided on the use of this script. What he does instead is to write two out of the three words in the script in which the rest of the edict is written, and to write only the last word in a different script. In the present instance the idea of the scribe seems to have been only to show off his knowledge of the Kharoshthī script, which he may have acquired not necessarily in the north but even in the capital city, where there must have been many possessing a knowledge of this script.

The next problem which I propose to consider in this paper, and which will be the last, has a bearing not only on the Minor Rock-edicts but on the edicts of Aśoka in general and the Pillar-edicts in particular. I have stated above that the Rūpnāth and the Sahasrām edicts give us a definite impression that at the time when these were issued the engraving of the principal Rock- and Pillar-edicts had yet to be carried out (above, p. 18). The relevant portion in the Sahasrām edict, which is clearer than the Rūpnāth version, can be translated as follows: 'And this matter you cause to be written on rocks or, where there are stone pillars here (i.e. in my territory), cause them to be written there also.' This declaration on the part of Aśoka would not only presuppose the existence of pillars within his empire but also that they were not inscribed at the time when these two versions of the Minor Rock-edicts were issued. Such being the case, it is possible to draw two conclusions, viz. (i) that, if Aśoka was responsible for the erection of the pillars, at least the Rūpnāth and the Sahasrām versions should be of a date later than the pillars, and (ii) that the pillars were erected earlier and not necessarily by Aśoka, and that he only made use of them for the purpose of having his edicts engraved. I have shown above, on evidence both external and internal, that the Minor Rock-edicts must have been the earliest of the edicts issued by Aśoka. Also, from what is stated in the seventh Pillar-edict, which is the latest of the edicts, it is evident that the pillars were erected by Aśoka himself (*dhammathambhāni kaṭāni*). How are we then to reconcile these seemingly contradictory statements made in the two Minor Rock-edicts and the seventh Pillar-edict? Dr. Radhakumud Mookerji, who has considered this aspect of the question, sums up his views in the following words: 'Thus he (Aśoka) does not claim that all the pillars to bear his inscription were his own creation. Some of them were already found in his dominion, presumably the work of his predecessors. These were not always utilized for his purpose by Aśoka. Thus at Rampurwā one of the two pillars is uninscribed, as one was sufficient for the inscription of his edict and fulfilment of his desire. But evidence is wanting to show how and why they had been constructed before Asoka's time.'¹ Dr. Mookerji had not apparently paid enough attention to the passage in the seventh Pillar-edict, in which Aśoka asserts that the pillars were erected by himself. It cannot be argued that only *some* of the pillars were erected by Aśoka and the rest by one of his predecessors. There is such a homogeneity in all the pillars, both in fabric and nature, that it is impossible to suppose that they were raised by different rulers. It is, however, quite likely that, when Aśoka started the idea of erecting pillars, he did not do so with the express purpose of having his edicts engraved on them. Aśoka, both in the Rock- and Pillar-edicts, has said that he wanted his scripts of morality (*dhamma-lipi*) to be everlasting, and that may have been the reason which led him to have them engraved on rocks and pillars. There is now a consensus of opinion among

¹ Radhakumud Mookerji, op. cit., p. 374.

scholars that in issuing the Rock-edicts Aśoka was influenced by his Persian neighbours.¹ But can the same influence be traced in the case of pillars also? In Bhandarkar's opinion 'pillars were doubtless not unknown to the Persian structures. But the erection of pillars independent and not forming part of any edifices seems to have originated in India alone and is not found in Western Asia or Europe before the time of the Roman emperors.'² The tradition of erecting pillars in commemoration of a great victory (*jaya-stambha*), or sacrifices (*yūpa*), or in honour of a deity (such as Garuḍa-dhvaja), is, however, a very ancient one in India. Unfortunately we have no definite knowledge of any pre-Mauryan column in India. Though references to *yūpa* are abundant in the Vedic literature, the earliest stone specimen so far discovered goes back only to the third century A.D. This is not surprising as in the earlier days the sacrificial pillars were made out of different species of wood, as laid down in the *Śrauta-* and *Grihya-sūtras*. The earliest specimen of a pillar erected in honour of a Brahmanical deity is the famous monolithic column at Besnagar (ancient Vidiśā), set up towards the middle of the second century B.C. in honour of Vāsudeva by a Greek named Heliodorus who calls himself a Bhāgavata or a worshipper of Kṛishṇa-Vishṇu. As for a *jaya-stambha* or victory pillar, we have no definite archaeological evidence of its existence at such an early period. What, however, appears to me as likely is that the very idea of raising victory-columns may have originated out of the *yūpas*. There are sacrifices like the *Rājasūya* and *Aśvamedha* which only a *Chakravarti*-monarch was authorized to perform. Such sacrifices necessarily followed an extensive conquest made by a ruler, and the *yūpas* erected at the time had a special significance. In the course of time, however, with the popularity of Buddhism (among other reasons), such sacrifices became less and less common, and the idea of raising pillars in commemoration of such events seems to have grown more popular, with or without the sacrifices. Even at the time of Kālidāsa the word *yūpa* had not lost its significance as a *jaya-stambha*.³ But can the Aśoka columns be regarded as pillars of victory in the ordinary sense of term? Evidence of his edicts seems overwhelmingly against this view. The edicts do not throw much light on the activities of Aśoka during the first eight years of his reign. But at the same time all the sources seem to point to the fact that the conquest of Kāliṅga was the only major conquest of his reign. We know from the thirteenth Rock-edict that Kāliṅga was conquered in the eighth year of his reign. We also know from his third Rock-edict that Aśoka paid a visit to the Sāmbodhi (Bodhi Gayā) in the tenth year of his reign. Furthermore, we can deduce from the Minor Rock-edict I that he was converted to Buddhism about two years earlier, though he was not very enthusiastic at the beginning. It would therefore be natural to conclude that the Kāliṅga war was the turning-point in his life. The horrors of war which he himself must have witnessed inclined him towards Buddhism which faith he seems to have adopted within three years of the Kāliṅga war. Aśoka therefore seems to have erected these pillars not to commemorate his war-victories but to commemorate a different kind of victory, viz. the 'victory of morality' (*dharma-vijaya*) as he himself terms it in his edicts. Even the pillars are called by him 'pillars of morality' (*dharma-stambhāni*). To start with he does not seem to have had any idea of having them engraved. They were simply erected on the principal thoroughfare leading out of his capital city, or in some important places connected with the life of the Buddha and the history of Buddhism. At a later time, when the idea of issuing the edicts struck him, he naturally

¹ V. A. Smith, op. cit., p. 141; D. R. Bhandarkar, *Asoka* (Calcutta, 1925), p. 205.

² Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 206.

³ Cf. *Samgrāma-nirvishṭa-Sahasrabāhur* = *ashṭādaśa-dvīpa-nikhāta-yūpaḥ* |
Ananyasādhāraṇa-rājaśabdo babhūva yogī kila Kārttavīryaḥ ||

—*Raghuvamśa*, VI, 38.

made use of the pillars which were already there. The sequence in which the edicts appear to have been issued is, first the Minor Rock-edicts and then the principal Rock-edicts and last of all the Minor Pillar-edicts. For the sake of expediency he did not think it worth while to have all the pillars inscribed, and that is why we find some of them left as they were originally. As at Rampurwā, it may be elsewhere also, for some reason or other two pillars had been set up near each other, and therefore it was thought proper to have only one inscribed. The time factor also may have been a contributory cause. This is perhaps the reason why the seventh Pillar-edict, which is the latest of all his edicts, and which is very important in that it gives a résumé of the measures introduced by Aśoka in the propagation of his *dhamma* during the twenty-seven years of his reign, does not find a place on all the pillars.

Another evidence why the pillars could not be raised by any of Aśoka's predecessors is found on the pillars themselves. As I have stated above, there exists such a homogeneity in all the pillars that the conclusion that a single directing hand was responsible for all of them seems irresistible. Of the pillars now in existence, that those bearing the Minor edicts are Buddhistic in origin there cannot be any doubt. They are found at Sārnāth, Sānchi, Rummindei and Nigliwa, all of which are connected with the life of one of the Buddhas or the history of Buddhism. But at first sight the same thing cannot be definitely said about the remaining pillars. On careful examination, however, even apart from the edicts engraved on them, there seems to be enough evidence to show that they were of a Buddhistic nature, and there was no predecessor of Aśoka who was a Buddhist by faith and who could have set them up. The animals which we now find surmounting the capital are the lion and the bull, wherever the figure has survived. But the Chinese pilgrims Fa Hian (A.D. 399) and Yuan Chwang (A.D. 629) mention the elephant and the horse also as animals figuring on them.¹ Significantly enough, all these four animals are also found on the capital of the pillar at Sārnāth, and are all connected directly with the life of the Buddha. The elephant is a reminder of the conception, when Māyā dreamt that a white elephant entered her womb. The bull, as shown by Foucher, 'incarnated the traditional date of the birth, the day of the full moon of the month Vaiśākha'.² The lion is a reminder of Buddha's connection with the royal family of the Śākya, and of his being called the Śākya-siṃha; and finally the horse is Kanthaka, the courser who was born on the same day as the Buddha and was ridden by the prince Siddhārtha on the occasion of his Great Renunciation, when he went in search of the peace of Nirvāṇa. Moreover, *siṃha*, the 'lion' is often used as an epithet of the Buddha himself³; he is also the bull and the musk-elephant among the great leaders (*mahāgaṇi-vasabha-gandhahathī*),⁴ and also a steed of man (*purisājañña*), i.e. a man of noble race. Even the lotus-motif on the Sārnāth pillar would recall to mind the lotuses which sprang up at each of the seven steps which the Buddha took as soon as he was born. There is therefore no room to doubt that the pillars are Buddhistic and were therefore set up by Aśoka himself and no other ruler.

¹ R. K. Mookerji, op. cit., pp. 83ff. According to a miniature reproduced by Foucher, the Lauriya Araraj pillar was surmounted by a Garuḍa (Smith, op. cit., p. 147), but Mookerji thinks it was a single lion (Mookerji, op. cit., p. 90).

² Foucher, *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art* (translated by L. A. Thomas and F. W. Thomas), p. 21.

³ *Aṅguttara*, II, 24; III, 122. *Saṅguttā*, I, 28, etc.

⁴ *Epigraphia Indica*, XX (1929-30), p. 16.